

# FIGHTS TO MODERNIZE METHODS OF CLEANING STREETS



Horse drawn street sweeping machines. The department has 161 of these for about 1,500 miles of pavement. Each machine can clean about two and a half miles of average street per day.



Commissioner J. T. Fetherston.



The squeegee. The department has thirteen squeegees for street washing. If all smooth pavements were washed twice a week, 150 machines, costing \$150,000, would be required.

## Commissioner Fetherston Has Presented to Board of Estimate Plans for a Radical Change in Methods and Equipment

NEW YORK has stood still in street cleaning, refuse collection and disposal, while other cities, notably those in Germany, have introduced methods of municipal cleaning and have set new standards of health, comfort and convenience for their citizens. This statement is made in the report of Commissioner John T. Fetherston to the Mayor on the work of the Street Cleaning Department for the past four and one-half months of the current year.

The report states that a survey of present equipment and facilities for its improvement disclosed the fact that practically no betterments in this regard had been introduced in the department since Col. Waring left office in 1897.

The existing equipment, according to the present Street Cleaning Commissioner, was found to be in very poor condition. "The open ash can, partly covered garbage can, open ash cart, open waterfront dump and open system of refuse disposal," he says, "are all in full operation as they were seventeen years ago. The people of this city have voiced time and again their demands for better street sanitation. Definite plans to meet this requirement have been prepared after hours, at night, since the first of the year."

To correct these lamentable conditions has been the chief task of the Street Cleaning Department since the beginning of the present administration. Radical changes in equipment and methods of cleaning have been devised and have been presented to the Board of Estimate by Commissioner Fetherston. The plans contemplate setting up a model street cleaning district on the East Side, between Twelfth and Fortieth streets, Sixth avenue and the East River. They provide for the installation of model street cleaning equipment described as follows in the report:

"A standard receptacle with an attached cover for garbage, a similar standard covered receptacle for ashes, a specially designed refuse collection vehicle, arranged to allow a transfer of garbage and ashes without exposure of its contents and a new form of waterfront dump where no materials will be exposed while their transfer to scows is in progress. By combining a power driven tractor or automobile with several types of trailers, it will be possible to collect refuse during the day and to flush streets at night, entirely eliminating present nuisances due to odors and dust in collecting refuse. Dry hand sweeping of streets will be minimized by heavy cleaning at night throughout the year and both sidewalks and roadway of every street in the model district can be swept or flushed with water throughout the year, except in freezing weather, when a new method of machine broom sweeping will replace flushing. During snow time the same tractor will be used to open roadways and haul snow twenty-four hours per day."

The report of the plan submitted by the Street Cleaning Commissioner gives the reasons for the selection of this district. Commissioner Fetherston says:

"The necessity for performing the work on the scale proposed is due to the fact that all vehicles in the district must use one type of waterfront dump, and in this case the design and construction of the dump depends upon the type of refuse collection equipment. Cars and motor tractors cannot very well use the same dumping point, so that when a dock is fitted up for motor tractors it cannot be used by cars. It is therefore necessary that any one dump designed for dustless collection and dustless disposal of refuse shall have a complete outfit for that purpose."

"The district was selected on the East Side because it was necessary to vacate an open waterfront dump adjacent to the city hospital and the Department of Docks could provide a new dock in the vicinity of Twentieth street and the East River."

"Any such model district," says Commissioner Fetherston, "should contain all classes of population representative of general city conditions rather than of any special class of buildings, and this district does contain such mixed classes of buildings, with a preponderance of tenement houses."

In speaking of the attention the city gives to the lower East Side the Commissioner calls attention to the fact that the Department of Street Cleaning has practically twice as many men working in the congested districts as in the residential sections, and also that the proposed model district contains a typical congested area. The plan for this district will obviate such nuisances as the open refuse receptacle, the open collection cart and the open waterfront dump, and in the one district alone should save the city over \$50,000 a year. Commissioner Fetherston says: "I propose to benefit living conditions not only in this district but eventually in all districts of the city. I hope to secure the necessary funds from the Board of Estimate and Apportionment to demonstrate that the work can be done economically and to the satisfaction of the community."

The expenditure of \$253,000 for the installation of modern equipment in this one street cleaning district of the Borough of Manhattan will result in advantages described in the report of the Street Cleaning Department as follows: An annual saving to the city of \$54,342.

Department property valued at \$690,000 returned to the city for sale or other uses.

The elimination of the nuisance and menace to health in the district, resulting from the open refuse can, the open collection cart and the open waterfront dump.

The thorough cleansing of each street in the district by machine washing, scrubbing or sweeping.

The maintenance of open streets free for traffic at all times during snowstorms by machine snow sweepers.

It is reported that 24 per cent. of the employees in the Department of Street Cleaning have been charged with violating the rules of the service. The Deputy Commissioners in the three boroughs of Manhattan, Brooklyn and The Bronx have heard 1,655 charges and 172 employees have been dismissed during the last four months and a half under the old regulations.

"In a properly managed organization no such condition should exist," says Commissioner Fetherston, "and the contrast leaves no doubt of the deplorable status of the department with respect to the management of its personnel under old regulations. Soon after the first of the year grievances abounded, many were founded, others based upon fancied wrongs. To rectify this situation and establish a new and helpful spirit of obedience, confidence and esprit de corps was one of the first duties of this administration."

The Street Cleaning Department has instituted a novel plan to control injustice and favoritism among its employees. The innovation is described in the report as follows:

"Commissioner Fetherston will be 'at home' on Fridays, from 4:30 to 7 P. M., to hear grievances which any member of the force desires to call to his attention."

In order to bring about real cooperation among department employees the Commissioner has appointed twenty-one

committees, composed of officers of the department, to work out better and more economical methods of sweeping, refuse collection, care of horses, stables, equipment, &c. These committees have analyzed and criticized existing results. They have recommended improvements and set forth in writing the best methods of performing stated classes of work for the purpose of standardizing the best practices.

No such procedure had ever before been undertaken in the department, according to the report, and hitherto there has been no uniformity in methods of hand sweeping, flushing, &c., in the various districts in the city.

Commissioner Fetherston emphasizes the fact that:

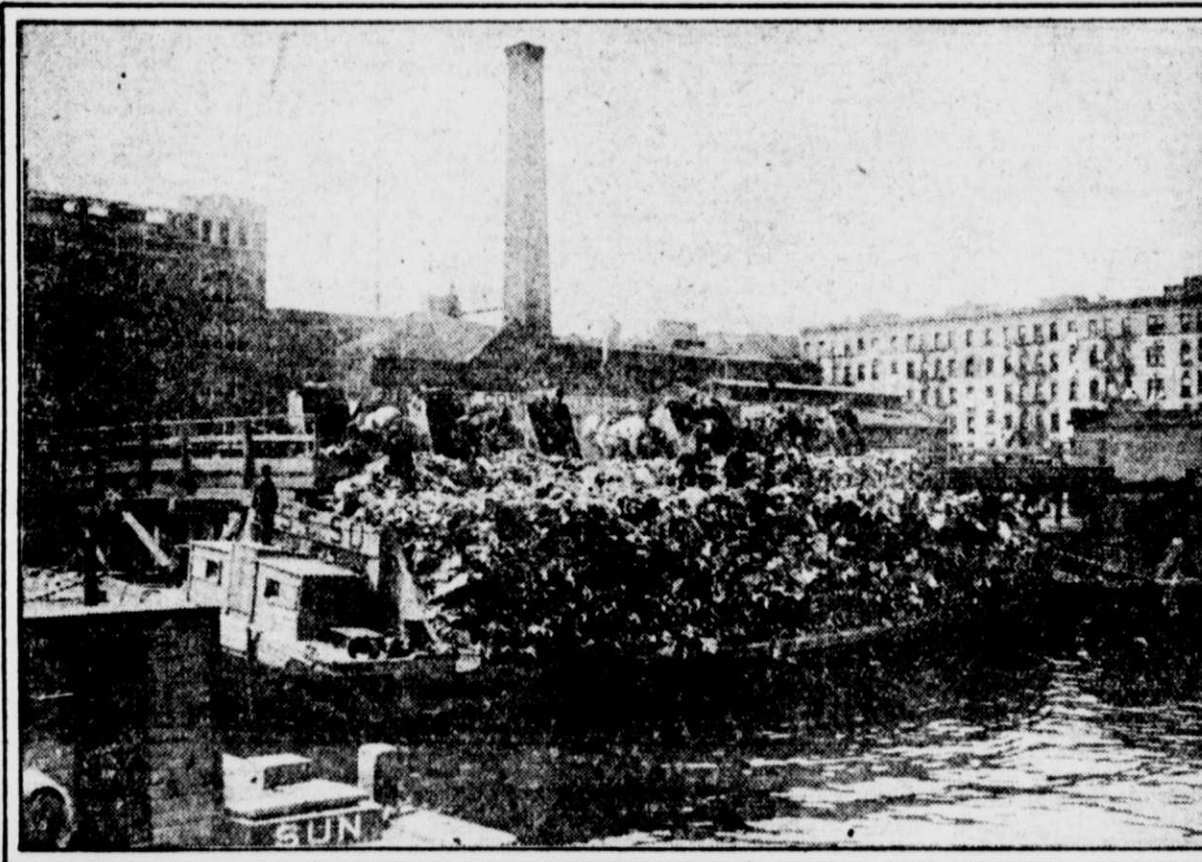
"The human problem is the big element in the Department of Street Clean-

ing. The cost of uniforms to officers and workers was excessive and the quality of materials unsatisfactory. The various grades of officers, sweepers, drivers, &c., were requested to elect representatives for separate committees on uniforms in order to fix standards of quality, style and cost. The committees report that on the summer uniforms alone a much better outfit of superior quality will be obtained than that purchased last year. The officers will save \$2.50 each an outfit, the drivers 75 cents an outfit and the sweepers 50 cents an outfit. For the whole force this represents a saving of \$6,655.72 on summer uniforms alone. The total saving to the men for the year will exceed \$10,000 as a result of this work.

The sweepers will wear straw hats

tested and there is now in progress, with the cooperation of Commissioner Williams of the Water Supply Department, an intensive study of the economy and results obtainable through different types of flushing equipment to determine the best method of street washing. A much more extensive schedule of streets to be flushed with water is in operation, and if the water supply proves sufficient during the summer all streets in need of washing will be flushed at least three times per week. In the congested sections of the city a thorough flushing of streets is being carried on with excellent results."

Amendment to the existing ordinance regarding litter on the streets, which is now awaiting action by the Board of Aldermen, is discussed in the report.



The open waterfront dump. Loading a scow. What happens when the wind blows.

ing with its force of 7,000 men, nearly all of whom are of the laboring class. To regulate, control and secure the best results from such a force by obtaining their confidence through 'square deal' methods was the first object of the new administration, and feasible evidences of the success of this effort are apparent. A large majority of the officers and men in the department are honest, capable and willing to give their best services to the city, but apparently they have needed a broader view of the importance of their activities and a new ideal of service. The present administration has devoted all possible time from routine work in office hours and out of hours to accomplish this end."

The report states that about \$20,000 has been saved in the purchase of horses this year. The absence of a street cleaning parade will result in saving over \$2,000. Both of these sums and every possible curtailment in expenses will be required to meet deficits in other funds. In fact, unless some of the regulations governing the administration of the budget are modified, says Commissioner Fetherston, it will be necessary to secure additional appropriations to make good deficiencies in contracts for the final disposition of refuse, which will undoubtedly exceed the allowance.

Complaints were received by the Commissioner that the cost of uniforms to officers and workers was excessive and the quality of materials unsatisfactory. The various grades of officers, sweepers, drivers, &c., were requested to elect representatives for separate committees on uniforms in order to fix standards of quality, style and cost. The committees report that on the summer uniforms alone a much better outfit of superior quality will be obtained than that purchased last year. The officers will save \$2.50 each an outfit, the drivers 75 cents an outfit and the sweepers 50 cents an outfit. For the whole force this represents a saving of \$6,655.72 on summer uniforms alone. The total saving to the men for the year will exceed \$10,000 as a result of this work.

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Strong expressions of approval have been received from the Merchants' Association, the Woman's Municipal League and other civic bodies. The ordinance as amended, if approved by the Board of Aldermen, will enable the Police Department and the Street Cleaning Department to minimize the loose paper nuisance and in time practically eliminate unsightly materials on the streets.

The work of snow removal was reported on to the Mayor, following the excessively heavy snowfalls and adverse weather conditions in February and March of this year. The Street Cleaning Commissioner again emphasizes the fact in the present report that the department never removed by trucks such a quantity of snow in any one year of its history as it did during the past winter, and the clearing of over 5,000,000 cubic yards (mainly of ice) from the streets with all available equipment in service was a tremendous task.

As to the new plans for "snow fighting" and snow removal Commissioner Fetherston says:

"A complete survey of over 600 miles of sewers has been undertaken to determine the size, depth and velocity of flow in sewers, in order to plan next year's work on a rational basis. Engineers assigned from the Commissioners of Accounts and the Bridge Department have

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## No Improvements in the Department Since 1897---Contemplate Establishing a Model Street Cleaning District on East Side

trained and instructed street cleaning foremen and extra drivers to do this work. The results of the observations so far secured by the non-technical employees of this department have been satisfactory and proved the ability of the men when properly instructed to undertake so large and difficult a programme as the survey of such an extensive sewerage system."

The sewers divisions of the Borough Presidents' offices are also cooperating with the Department of Street Cleaning in this programme.

It is planned to advertise contracts at an early date for snow removal by trucks, following last year's form of agreement, with certain modifications, to minimize delays.

"Schedules of the order in which streets are to be cleared," the report states, "are likewise under consideration and maps showing the distribution of gangs with streets cleared each day during this season's work are in course of preparation. When the progress maps are completed any desirable changes in last year's schedules will be apparent and can readily be made in time for next year's plans. Every effort has been made to expedite plans for 'snow fighting' and snow removal next season, but the force available for this purpose is inadequate and should be supplemented by a permanent staff organization attached to this office."

"Every day should be cleanup day, particularly in the congested districts of the city," says Commissioner Fetherston, "and this department is prepared to remove all household rubbish regularly, obviating the necessity for a special spring campaign."

The Commissioner's report on the results of this year's cleanup work undertaken in cooperation with the Health Department shows that only about one-third the amount of last year's rubbish was placed out for removal. The hauling of this year's material was rapidly accomplished at little excess cost over the regular appropriation. It is pointed out that the beneficial effect of a public inventory of useless and at times dangerous waste articles and their prompt removal from habitations has had a decided bearing upon the health of the community.

Commissioner Fetherston concludes his report with the following statement on the subject of the cooperation of his department with practically all the other departments under the control of the Mayor:

"The various city departments—Police, Fire, Finance, Health, Water Supply, Bridges, Charities, Commissioners of Accounts, Correction, Tenement House, Chamberlain, Parks, and the Borough Presidents' offices—all have actively cooperated in their various activities with the Street Cleaning Department to an extent never before approached by previous administrations. This is a most helpful indication and augurs well for the future accomplishment of the present administration."

Practically considered, the city is nothing more than a great household. The streets are the hallways of the city home, and municipal housekeeping requires that they shall be kept clear of dirt, filth and litter.

The Department of Street Cleaning should be required to remove from the thoroughfares only such refuse as results from a legal use of the public hallways or streets.

Existing ordinances declare that preventable litter, such as paper, garbage, ashes, rubbish, and other materials of a similar character, cannot legally be placed on the streets. With a population running up to 5,000,000 people in the three boroughs of Manhattan, The Bronx and Brooklyn, the negligence or carelessness of even a small fraction of the people not only places an undue burden upon the city's resources but results in well merited criticism of the untidiness of the whole community. This reflection on the character of the inhabitants of the city of New York is often made by foreigners and travelers, and on the whole the criticism is often justified, mainly because a minority of the people pay no regard to law or order.

During the past winter this was particularly apparent while street cleaning operations were retarded for a time on account of the presence of snow on the roadways. Apparently many citizens regarded the advent of a snowfall as an invitation to throw ashes and garbage on roadway and sidewalk, even though empty cans might be available. It would even seem as if some of our people regarded the presence of snow as a justification for discarding the use of ash and garbage receptacles. During other times of the year, particularly in summer, the number of newspapers thrown from office buildings deposited on streets by pedestrians, swept from stores and otherwise placed in the hallways of the city almost discourages efforts on the part of the city authorities to collect and control the amount of unsightly material on the streets.

### THE ASH ON THE CIGAR.

YOUNG men, very young men, in their earlier smoking days like to keep the ash on a cigar as long as it will stay. Somebody has told them that it is a mark of a good cigar for it to have an ash that does not crumble and fall off. It is at least true that a long ash marks the cigar as one made with a long filler.

The young man smoker who likes to see the ash grow and hang on handles his cigar with great care so as not to joggly it off, and if he smokes up the whole cigar without dropping the ash he thinks that he has been smoking a good cigar and that he is a good smoker.

As he grows older the young man comes to be a smoker of another sort. He flicks the ashes off his cigar jauntily. Then as he grows older still he may come to be careless about the ash, or he may be so engrossed with other things as he smokes that he lets the ash accumulate, to drop maybe on his garments and cover them with ashes.

Still later in life the grown, mature man is likely to knock the ash off his cigar at frequent intervals, to keep it down short. He smokes in a business-like way, he doesn't want the ashes scattered over him. But as he grows older yet, when he comes to be an oldish man, he may come again as he smokes to keep the ash on a cigar as long as he can.

You may see an old man smoking a cigar thus, holding it carefully and smoking slowly and contemplatively, looking at the ash occasionally and clearly interested in seeing it grow, just as he did when he was young. Why he does this now is uncertain, but perhaps it is because it brings back memories of his youth.

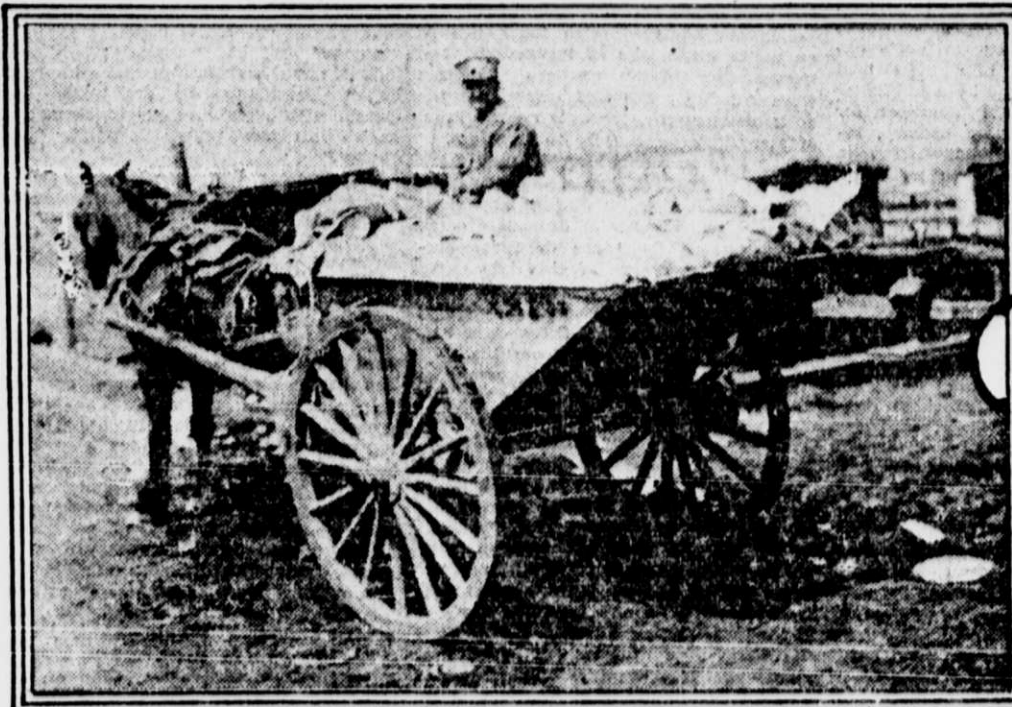
### AT THE HEAD OF PROCESSION.

WHEN the policeman at a Broadway crossing blew his whistle to hold up the traffic on the cross street for a minute or two and let the north and south streams flow it so happened that there was coming along the cross street, bound west, a piano organ on wheels drawn by a man and a woman.

At the moment the policeman blew his whistle the hand organ had come just to the edge of the north and south sidewalk crossing on the east side of Broadway, and at the sound it held up of course, for the organ folks know and obey the traffic signals just as the drivers do.

Then there the hand organ stood with vehicles of all sorts banking up behind it. It seemed odd to see this hand organ standing there, heading a long, halted procession of trucks and wagons.

In a minute the policeman raised his whistle to his lips again, and instantly the organ folks, who had kept their eyes on him all the time just as the drivers do, tugged at the shafts of their outfit and started in rolling. They were off, with that long line of trucks and wagons, already in motion, following.



Open ash cart in use for more than seventeen years in New York.



Temporary cover for present ash carts.